Celebrating and Leveraging
The National Blue Ribbon School Award:
Collected Ideas from Ceremony Participants

From all-school picnics and downtown parades to blue ice cream and billboards, school representatives at the 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools Ceremony shared a host of ideas for how they would celebrate their success and share their hard-earned knowledge. In a session facilitated by USED Regional Representatives Elizabeth Williamson, Helen Littlejohn, and Dennis Bega, attendees traded strategies and posted ideas. Their ideas are collected here.

How Will You Celebrate?

Parties and Celebrations

• Prior to our annual Open House, we held a formal assembly for our parents to announce the award. We also provided cookies and coffee.
• Student assembly with necklace beads
• Picnic for students and staff with games
• Have a Blue Ribbon night for students, parents, faculty to highlight the Blue Ribbon success
• A school-wide assembly with video montage of year overview
• We had a catered lunch – children got Blue Ribbon bands; faculty/staff received Blue Ribbon Jackets; we received a Blue Ribbon Banner to display outside school
• Blue Bell Ice Cream Celebration; parade with feeder schools
• Picnic provided by D.A.D.S. Club for entire school
• Blue Ribbon week of events; student-centered; different activity each day—wear blue, blue pencils, blue ribbon badge and ribbon wearing; blue ribbon essay.
• We hosted a concert for the students during school
• School-wide dances by grade level
• Parade to middle school (horses in blue ribbons)

Community Involvement

• Community open house; media coverage of open house
• Invite the public in to visit the school and celebrate its success
• Flag-raising ceremony included all MS students and some HS student representatives along with primary teachers.
• Reach out to local and state leaders and invite to celebrations
• Superintendent’s dinner
• Our school board held its meeting at our school on the official announcement day and held a reception for our faculty and staff prior to the meeting.
• Having a legislator present the plaque
• Blue Ribbon School pictures and display in local library
• Ceremony with a local TV personality as host, making it a community event
• City council representative issued a proclamation
• Proclamation by mayor presented at village/town meeting
• Formal assembly/ceremony with dignitaries
• Pep Rally, TV, newspaper, high school band, football players, cheerleaders, parade with banners/shakers: All wore blue. Invited county admin, school board, Board of Supervisors, Central Office, former principals, PTO, school alumni
• The school board presented our school with a beautiful plaque that is also on display
• Board of Education recognition; student carnival for student celebration
• State Superintendent and First Lady of Georgia for an awesome school assembly
• Former principal attended parade; former retired teachers in parade; local mayor, representatives, state representatives in parade
• High school band marching in parade
• Celebration Day breakfast (staff & guests), ceremony (with videos from DC), students share essays on “Why a Blue Ribbon School,” celebration lunch for students, wrapping building in blue table sheeting as a “ribbon”
• Plan a Blue Ribbon Family Night
• School field trip

**Media Outreach**

• Newspaper article
• We were on Channel 12 and in the Rockland and Westchester County Journal News
• TV interviews, newspaper, governor visits
• Publicity: keep public aware of events; let community know that it may start with the administration, but it takes teachers, students, parents, parish...custodians to make us a Blue Ribbon School
• TV from 40 minutes away came
• Tape and televise ceremony on local access channel.
• Local newspapers

**Staff Recognition**

• Board recognition for staff
• Lunch honoring teachers

**Blue Ribbon Themed Items**

• Blue Ribbon bracelets for all students, staff, and central administration
• Purchase ribbons, magnets, t-shirts
• Wear shirts on special day (tee-shirts for kids & polos for staff)
• Car magnet bumper stickers
• Blue Ribbons on each door
• “Blue Plate” lunch for kids
• Blue Ribbon shirts for students & staff
• Blue Ribbons for each child, faculty shirts, banners, bracelets
• Magnet for cars in carpool (all families)
• Teddy Bear Parade: each bear proudly wears a blue ribbon
• Blue mugs: a National Blue Ribbon School
• Balloon release; blue cookies, juice, and Jello.
• Purchase tee-shirts for the entire student body
• Purchase polo shirts for the faculty/staff
• Hallway blue ribbons
• Cafeteria mural with blue ribbon
• Staff picture for yearbook with their t-shirts
• Wear tee-shirts once/month
• Wear blue one day/month
• Blue Ribbon pencils given out for state tests
• Blue Ribbon Song
• Commencement – blue balloons

Displays
• A Photo collage of BRS ceremony
• Blue Ribbon banner across the train station announcing our Blue Ribbon
• Blue Ribbon around trees
• We created a Blue Ribbon Display Case which includes the letter of congratulation in a beautiful frame
• Each child tied a blue ribbon on school fence
• Created banners for halls
• Purchase banners
• Blue Ribbons on trees
• Photo of all kids on playground in shape of ribbon in blue t-shirts
• Wrapped school in blue ribbon
• Creation of Blue Ribbon sign to be placed above school sign
• Hang banners on the interior and exterior of the school
• Plant blue flowers around school in the spring
• Dedicate yearbook to Blue Ribbon

School “Branding”
• Add logo to letterhead and website
• Print stationery with the Blue Ribbon School logo
• Highlight the Blue Ribbon Schools Awards in the school’s newsletter
• Change stationery
• Poster to market school
• Acknowledge Blue Ribbon status on email signatures and student/faculty resumes
• Parent letters

**Keeping the Momentum**

• Morning announcement: one sentence motivator – student reads in announcement
• Essays: why do you believe our school is a Blue Ribbon School? Posted around gym for award ceremony
• Emphasize the importance of students and parents in receiving the award
• Video: what makes our school great? Students/teachers comment
• Primary students do art on “Being a Blue Ribbon School”
• Essay for intermediate students
• PowerPoint to explain in each classroom

**What Resources Do You Need/Can You Access?**

• Grants; donations; academic support
• Student leaders stepping up to plan and motivate their peers
• Change perceptions of lower socio-economic populations and diversity in general
• PTO support – financial; BOE support – logistical
• How do we get Governor to visit our school?

**How Will You Share Your Successes?**

• Have invited school board to visit classrooms
• Continue to let other schools come in to observe best practices
• Will participate/facilitate regional principal’s meetings
• Will do professional development presentations—RtI, PBIS, VIP
• Will attend and participate in state and district improvement efforts—common core/RtI/PBIS/VIP
• Host the governor and representatives
• Invite parents and education officials to visit classrooms to observe best practices
• Relocation/realtor; PD for teachers and administrators
• The State Dept. of Education is paying for a professional film crew to interview our school and selected people; what we are doing
• School tours for both teachers and parents